

BLIND BEGGARS

Survey, July 1927

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AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.

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After his marriage in 1905 and after a short term as chaplain, Mr. Ware succeeded Horace Bumstead as the third president of Atlanta. Trusted utterly by his Negro friends, he never ceased to try to win some of the southern white leaders to a deeper understanding of the Negro situation. He believed that the leaders of both races should work together and learn of each other. He pleaded for tolerance and an interest that included not only family, school, race, but the welfare of mankind. He warned against partisanship and urged cooperation wherever that might be brought about without the lowering of standards. He had the courtesy that "listened to another's personality" and he had a faith that never admitted defeat for any struggling soul. In his search for health in various sanitariums, he touched many lives. Young people especially felt his

strength and serenity and pioneer spirit and became aware of new ways of transforming defeat into victory.



TO be known and loved as "a friend of the children" requires a rare combination of wisdom and unselfishness. When one of these gentle, whimsical, far-seeing men passes it leaves so complete an emptiness that one realizes with a pang of regret how few they are and how hard to find. It is so easy to gather together classes in "parental education" and to talk glibly of "problems" and "complexes" and "the new psychology." But a real understanding of what a little child feels and thinks and needs is no casual, artificial growth. Those who achieve it are, like "Tusitala" and Eugene Field and "Margaret" of New Orleans, rich spirits, hard to spare. William Fincke, who died recently in his early fifties, lived long enough to see the things he undertook for the sake of his young friends firmly established. He had served for some years as pastor of the Greenwich Presbyterian Church in New York City before he was stricken with the long illness from which he never recovered. He had been a courageous friend of movements for human betterment, even when it meant facing harsh criticism as a "radical" and a "bolshhevik." But the real work of his heart was the Pioneer Youth Camp and Manumit School, both planned to make life fuller and richer and more joyous for the children of city workers. William Fincke and his wife gave to Manumit the beautiful rolling acres of their farm near Pawling, New York. The farm routine—crops and gardens and stock raising—are a vital part of the school life that now goes on in the fine old farm buildings (see The Survey, June 15, page 334). Manumit and Pioneer Youth Camp are expressions of a genuine friendship for children, and through them William Fincke's understanding love for girls and boys remains a continuing and a growing thing.



THERE are two kinds of beggars. Some sit on the street corner and hold out tin cups; some sit behind mahogany desks and send out mail appeals." Thus the challenge of street mendicant to social worker at the biennial convention of the American Association of Workers for the Blind. Some three hundred persons from thirty-seven states—teachers, business men, field workers, executives, private citizens, many of them blind—had gathered to talk over the adjustment of the blind to the community. Addressing this group was the Honorable Matthew A. Dunn, member of the lower house of the Pennsylvania Legislature, a blind man who made his living for many years as a "street worker" in Pittsburgh and elsewhere. He was elected on a platform of pensions for the blind, partly through the support of labor organizations. Street work, he maintains, is a necessity for many blind people; wages in the special workshop for the handicapped are too small to support a wife and children; a man can make

several times as much on the street—and who has the right to deny him as good a living as he can get? We shall have street work until the state provides pensions adequate for the blind and their families. Thus Mr. Dunn. Blind people who are now working on the street came to his support. Street work, they testify, is not "the easiest way" but it is the way they earn a living and they have a right to continue in it. After all, they say, every charitable institution in the country is supported by begged funds; the street worker is only franker in his begging. A. W. Lewis of Harrisburg, who introduced himself as representing the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, endorsed Mr. Dunn and his supporters: "Our poor blind brothers are entitled to a living wage and the arm of labor will keep them on the streets until society provides for their support."

The reactions of the social workers present were vigorous and varied. The independent blind have always more or less ostracized the blind who begged. The seeing worker for the blind usually shares this feeling and organized work for the blind frequently has been identified with efforts to remove the blind from the streets. Small wonder then that discussion came thick and fast. Edison Mosiman of the Newark, New Jersey, Social Service Bureau, received hearty support when he stated as a fundamental proposition that mendicancy among the blind is no worse and no better than mendicancy in any other group; it is an evidence of fundamental unsoundness in society. Blindness makes a special appeal to the sympathies of the public, uninformed as to the thousands of self-supporting blind men and women who pursue useful and even distinguished lives. And so long as there are people to give to beggars, blind or seeing, so long will there be beggars to take. Hearty approval also greeted the statement that the street worker gets the wrong kind of publicity for the blind, yet this is the only publicity that ever reaches the average citizen. "If we could only exhibit on a street corner some of our blind factory operatives running drill presses and tapping-machines as efficiently as the seeing operatives among whom they work," said one young social worker, "then we might make the public realize the abilities of the blind."

On other points there was less unanimity of opinion: Whether mendicancy is necessary or not necessary depends on whether we can offer a job which yields more than a bare subsistence; before we attack the professional beggars we must be able to take care of the men who do not want to beg; we will never get enough opportunities for the blind in sighted industry until we replace the negative advertising of the blind beggar by something positive; organized labor is the friend of the blind and yet scarcely a door in organized industry is open to the blind. "I gave two good eyes to organized labor," said Senator Lanius, the blind senator of Pennsylvania, "and I ask the support of organized labor for organized work for the blind."

State aid in the form of pensions or relief for the blind was recommended by several workers from states which had such laws in force, but the general feeling was that such relief should be granted only on the ground of need.

The cure for mendicancy? A difficult problem not to be settled here and now. As one speaker put it, after a man has survived the experience of having his friends see him on the street it takes a real exertion of will to exchange the easy life and the comforts which mendicancy provides for long hours of labor and meagre existence upon the inadequate pay which the average blind laborer receives.

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WHEN it is possible for the general secretary and industrial secretary in charge of important work among the city's working girls to admit with a certain pride membership in an organization definitely rated as anti-patriotic, pacifistic, and through its interlocking directorates in direct liaison with Soviet Russia and international revolution; . . . when it is the general practice of these radicals, having attained to positions of influence in important community organizations to make these organizations serve purposes contrary to the best interests of any American community, then there would appear to be occasion for the patriotic majority to know the truth and to set about eliminating these influences as positive forces and centers of influence.

Thus muttered the Fort Wayne, Indiana, News-Sentinel in one of a series of six articles designed to show up radical plots in America, published last March.

What was the nefarious organization, whose adherents were undermining the safety of Fort Wayne through their connection with the local Y.W.C.A.? None other than the Fellowship of Reconciliation. By processes of reasoning known only to itself, the News-Sentinel declared the Fellowship to be "intimately hooked up with the Reds, the communists, and the subversive elements of the most pernicious radicalism. It is itself opposed to decent preparedness for this country. It is extremely pacifistic in its program. In league with the vicious designers and plotters of Moscow, it eminently serves the purposes of the bolsheviks."

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Thus a campaign of shouting reduced to silence the responsible officers of the Y.W.C.A., who were ready to declare privately their confidence in these members of the staff; it removed from offices which they had filled ably not only these two women but two other secretaries and one member of the clerical staff who have resigned in protest; and it divided the city of Fort Wayne into two hotly disputing camps. The triumph of fear and hysteria in a time so far removed from the real emergency of war is as discouraging as it is surprising. The National Board of the Y.W.C.A., after sending representatives to talk over the events in Fort Wayne, has testified to its faith in the work and leadership of the secretaries who resigned by offering them responsible positions elsewhere.



AT the time of his death on May 19, Edward Twichell Ware was president emeritus of Atlanta University, having resigned the active presidency on account of tuberculosis which attacked him eight years ago. He was born and brought up in Atlanta, surrounded by the New England teachers of the University and by its Negro students and teachers. In his home he watched his parents live their lives of service and Christian faith. After graduating from Yale and from Union Theological Seminary, he traveled in the North as financial secretary for the University. His heart was in his work. He believed in it. He felt then as indeed he did until the day of his death, that here was a chance to put Christianity to the test, to make of "brotherhood" something more than a word. He believed that every soul, regardless of race, color, creed, should have a chance to train and use what power lay within him. Atlanta University was chartered "for the liberal and Christian education of youth." Its aim was to prepare leaders. Over 80 per cent of its graduates have been teachers.

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